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LEAGUE OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONS

The conference of the League of Library Commissions was held at Colorado Springs, June 4-5, 1920, as one of the affiliated organizations of the A. L. A.

The meetings were in the sun parlor of the Antlers Hotel.

There were present thirty-one representatives from twenty state library commissions.

Both sessions drew largely from the visiting librarians who were interested in the papers and topics under discussions. The meetings were opened by the president, Miss Julia A. Robinson. Mr. William J. Hamilton presented the first paper,

A RÉSUMÉ OF COUNTY LIBRARY LAWS

The active interest in the subject is shown by the fact that within the past two years, six states have passed county legislation, Oregon, Alabama, Utah, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Kentucky, while six more propose to introduce such legislation next year. Some of these already have county laws, though not satisfactory ones.

I have not attempted to draw up a model law as this is something which can be done satisfactorily only with a knowledge of the constitution and local conditions of the state affected. Thus the Illinois constitution does not permit exemption of minor localities from a county tax; the Texas constitution forbids a minimum tax rate; the Georgia constitution prevents any county library tax at present; several state constitutions prevent tax levies by appointed boards.

Each state will have to study the possibilities locally, but there are certain features (at least ten of them) which should be covered in any wholly satisfactory county law. They are not given exactly in the order of their importance.

1. Library board should have the right to fix the tax rate. Whether this board be the governing board of the county is not essential. This point is covered by the county laws of California, Indiana, Kentucky, Montana, Texas, Utah. Some

state constitutions forbid tax rate fixing by non-elective officials.

2. A minimum tax rate, not an appropriation from the general county funds. Satisfactory laws, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wyoming. Forbidden by Texas constitution.
3. County officials obliged to provide library service.
 - a. Without election.
Law provides this in Indiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania (under certain conditions), Utah, Wyoming.
 - b. On election.
Law provides this in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas.
4. Permanence of library once established. Provided in Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah.
5. County representation on city board giving extension service.
Provision satisfactory in laws of California, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin.
6. Certification of county librarians from state body.
Covered in county laws of California, Montana, Texas, and Utah.
7. Exemption of sub-districts with separate libraries if they desire it.
Provided for by California, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Utah. The State constitution of Illinois forbids such exemption.
8. Required attendance of librarians at state and district meetings at the expense of their libraries.
Covered by California and Utah laws.
9. Right of the board to borrow money for erection or purchase of a building.
Nebraska gives board right of condemnation and eminent domain.
10. Necessity of reporting to state department in charge of library activities.
This is in Utah county statute and in some other states.

Mr. Hamilton supplemented his paper with a tabulation of the county library laws, grouping the states under the Middle Atlantic, Middle West, Southern states, Rocky Mountain states, and Pacific coast. The following points were included in the tabulation: Date of law; Permissive or

mandatory measure, or one that required an election; Exemption of part of county; Amount of tax; Governing body; Certification of librarians; Location of central library and disestablishment.

In the discussion which followed, Miss Margaret Wade, formerly of the Indiana Commission, spoke on the salient features of the Indiana law:

1. Action is forced from county officials by petitioners, without the necessity of an election.
2. The library board has the right to fix rates, within the limit of ten cents on one hundred dollars.
3. The local library board does not contract with county officials, but with the addition of county representatives it becomes the managing board of a county library.
4. Small libraries already existing are not swallowed up by the new county system, but retain their own independence, and their locality is exempt from the county tax. They may, however, come into the system whenever they choose.
5. If any board of county commissioners fails to levy the tax provided for by this act, the members of such board are individually responsible for the amount the tax would have yielded if levied and this amount may be collected from them by suit of tax payer.

One feature of the law that is not satisfactory was incorporated into it by certain members of the legislature, and affects those counties in which there is no established library. Through the provision thus inserted, no two members of the library board may be chosen from the same township. This makes it very difficult to have a board meeting, as members of the board are so scattered that it is almost impossible to get a quorum. Two Indiana libraries have had to meet this condition. A larger local representation would be better in every way as it would mean that more members would attend meetings and thus keep in closer touch with library interests.

Because of this condition, the Public Library Commission now advises the organization of a town library in the county seat, and then extension of service to the county,

rather than beginning by organizing a county library.

Miss Downey told of the campaign for a county library law in Utah, saying that the mandatory clause was written into the bill by the legislators, and that the close connection between the Library Commission and the state department of education was very helpful.

The question was asked whether it was easier to establish county libraries by petition or election. The consensus of opinion was that the petition was the easier method.

Mr. Ferguson, in speaking of the California county libraries, said that the state library discontinued its system of traveling libraries when they began to establish county libraries. Their loan of books now was confined to books on special subjects which could not be obtained at the local library.

Miss Harriet A. Wood, chairman, Committee on Certification, of the Minnesota Library Association, outlined a plan for certification of librarians to be presented to the Minnesota Library Association at its annual meeting in September.

PLAN FOR CERTIFICATION

This plan is not intended to be retroactive, nor in any way to affect librarians in their present positions unless they wish to apply for certificates. It is simply placing a standard upon librarianship in the state of Minnesota for the use of those who shall enter the work after the adoption of this plan. The work is to be in charge of a board to be known as the Board of Certification of the Minnesota Library Association. It is to consist of five members, one of whom shall be the Director of Libraries, who shall be chairman of the board; one to be the State Supervisor of School Libraries, who shall be secretary of the board. The above two to be members *ex officio*. The remaining three members, one to be librarian of a large public library, one librarian of a small public library, and one a librarian of an educational institution, elected by the Minnesota Library Association.

tion for terms of three years each, except that on the initial election they shall be elected for one, two, and three-year terms, respectively, the terms of this office to be determined by lot between the three members first elected.

The certificate included four grades, first for life, second for five years, third for three years, fourth for one year. The certificate for each grade is based upon general education, library training and experience. The plan provided for renewal of second, third and fourth grade certification.

LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICE

Miss Baldwin read the following resolution, which was presented by Miss Guerrier:

WHEREAS, S. 2457, H. R. 6870, a bill to provide a library information service in the Bureau of Education, meets a need long felt by the Library Commissions, be it

RESOLVED, that the League of Library Commissions, in annual session at Colorado Springs, June 4, 1920, records its approval of this bill and respectfully urges its passage; further be it

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to each senator and to each representative and that they be urged to support the bill.

The League voted to adopt the resolution. The meeting adjourned.

SECOND SESSION

The second session was called to order by the president, Miss Robinson.

LOUISIANA LIBRARY COMMISSION

Miss Louise Singley offered the resolution that the League of Library Commissions endorse the Louisiana Library Commission bill and that the following telegram be sent to Mrs. A. F. Storm, president, Federation Louisiana Women's Clubs, Colonial House, Baton Rouge, Louisiana:

"National League of Library Commissions urges approval of Louisiana Library Commission as only basis for permanent library progress.

LEAGUE OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONS."

Miss West, of Texas, spoke in favor of the resolution. The League voted to sus-

tain the resolution and to send the telegram.

Miss Nellie Williams, secretary of Nebraska Commission, spoke on Commission publicity, supplementing her talk by a very effective poster exhibit which she had used at state and county fairs in Nebraska.

COMMISSION PUBLICITY

Publicity is not only a potent factor in business, but is recognized as a present-day necessity. The library profession is awake to the urgency of advertising. Library commissions having a field of operation and a public desiring to be served, feel the responsibility of acting as the medium of supply. The problem resolves itself into the methods to be used.

As to these means, involving both cost and effect, publicity by way of the press and by personal contact combine to bring results. Press publicity may be secured without cost, its returns are prompt, its effect far-reaching. The rural population desire reading matter, and their patronage can be gained thus by a minimum of effort.

Then why spend money, time and energy doing personal contact publicity? Because it pays. The field of work can be better visualized, the people reached more effectively.

This may be done by state, district and county fairs. State fair advertising is good, but working on the theory that personal contact is good, it has seemed possible that more personal contact might be better. Hence the unit of organization may be lessened and advertising be done in district and county fairs.

To make this publicity effective, an exhibit may be prepared emphasizing service as the central idea. Radiating lines may show the agencies by which that service is performed. Club women, public libraries, high schools, county superintendents, rural teachers, county agents, university extension and the clergy help library commissions to reach the individual, who is, in the last analysis, the unit to be served.

We believe in a "book for every man and a man for every book."

Miss Anna C. Hall, library organizer for New York, read a paper on

LIBRARY INSTITUTES AND DISTRICT MANAGERS

The problem of the institute varies in different states. New York state has many small libraries in isolated communities. One hundred fifty libraries in communities of less than five hundred population. A large number of untrained librarians whose lack of knowledge is serious but whose lack of morale and ambition is even more serious.

Institutes presumably have two main purposes: first, elementary training; second, development of professional spirit or esprit de corps. The time to be given to an institute is usually one day. An attempt in New York state to hold two-day institutes proved a failure and can probably only be made successful when state funds are available to cover the librarian's expenses. The instruction given in so short a time is necessarily scattering and desultory, and unless followed up by visits of an organizer, may be entirely misunderstood and misapplied. The only way to give successful elementary instruction is through practice and exercise under supervision. The leaders of the New York institutes are drawn partly from the staff of the State Department and partly from volunteers among the librarians of the state. Such volunteer leadership has its good points in that the official atmosphere of the state department is neutralized. It makes, however, any definite scheme of instruction highly difficult. The real service of the institute is in the development of the proper spirit and enthusiasm for the work.

The state meetings in New York are large, the attendance usually running over two hundred. The shy country librarian feels lost and finds little in the program that applies to her problem or that she can even understand.

The institutes, rather than interfering with the state meeting, have helped increase its attendance. The institutes have proved elementary training classes for the state meeting. Acquaintanceships have been formed in the smaller gatherings and

enthusiasm aroused for librarianship as a profession. The elements of the successful meeting are as follows:

1. Definite practical topics.
2. Democratic leadership.
3. Informal discussion.
4. Opportunity for sociability.
5. Book discussions.

The elements of successful instruction are the elimination of heresies, repetition of certain topics for several years, and a disguised application of the recitation method. From the point of view of the needs of New York libraries, the most important thing to be considered is that the institute meeting shall be pleasant and attractive to everyone who attends.

The discussion which followed Miss Hall's paper brought out the various ways in which the district meetings were handled in the various states.

Miss Clara F. Baldwin, library director for Minnesota, discussed the subject

MINIMUM OF POPULATION WARRANTING TAX SUPPORT

In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we should first determine what is a library? We took reports of libraries in towns of small population to ascertain what had been accomplished. There were forty-two libraries in towns of less than one thousand. Only two of these could be said to have any degree of efficiency. Both were exceptional circumstances. One library received a considerable bequest and is now co-operating with schools in the employment of a librarian, with excellent results. The other library has a room in the city building and is located in a village which has high valuation. In both these villages the expenditures are \$1 and \$1.50 per capita, and the circulation is seven and ten books per capita.

In villages of between one thousand and two thousand, there were forty-two public libraries, thirteen Carnegie libraries, two other buildings, sixteen libraries in city halls and schools (none over 5,000 volumes), seventeen have book collections of over 2,000 volumes, eleven have a circulation of

over five per capita, and nine spend as much as fifty cents per capita.

An average town of less than 2,000 cannot or does not maintain an adequate library. Small Carnegie buildings costing from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and requiring only 10 per cent, have been a detriment rather than a help. The building itself eats up all the income, leaving nothing for books or library appropriation, and the income is not inclined to increase. It is very difficult to discourage women's clubs in this regard. These facts obviously point to the county library, with its larger taxing unit providing a sufficient income to give adequate service.

Miss Anna May Price, secretary, Illinois Library Extension Commission, presented a paper on

LIBRARY BUILDINGS FOR SMALL TOWNS

Small towns should not have library buildings. All towns with a library income of \$1,500 or less should be satisfied with rented accommodations. In the small town library it has been frequently found that the janitor's salary exceeds the librarian's, and after the first two or three years, repairs and redecorations make large demands upon the library budget, thus cutting the amount which should be spent on books. Not the library building, but the gathering together of a good collection of books and providing for the circulation of the same, is the real cause for the existence of the library. When the library income can afford the upkeep of a building, the first consideration in the new venture is the selection of an architect. Choose one, if possible, who has some knowledge of library problems, and who is willing to consult librarians as to the interior arrangement especially, for which ease of administration, convenience and utility should be the guiding principles.

The architect should supervise the construction of the building. The directors should also give the building personal supervision, that there should be no damp basement or leaky roof. The one-room plan is the best for small libraries. Any de-

sired division into rooms and librarian's office may be made by book shelving. Wall shelving should provide for a large part of the collection. The basement plan should receive attention also. There should be storage room, plenty of unpacking space, and a room for extension work which connects by lift with either the loan desk or catalog room above. The auditorium should preferably be above the main floor in place of in the basement, as is frequently the case in the small library.

In the discussion which followed, Mr. Dudgeon suggested that the library building be located on the business street and that the style be much the same as any business block which is entered on the street level. This would do away with the long flight of stone steps leading up to many of the memorial libraries.

Miss Reba Davis, librarian of the University of Wyoming, Laramie, but formerly a member of the staff of the Iowa Library Commission, spoke on Traveling Library Statistics. Miss Davis gave a résumé of the circumstances under which the statistical blanks at present in use were compiled, and pointed out that in the years that have elapsed since the adoption of this blank, traveling library work has so developed in many of the states that the uniform statistical blanks have become inadequate, although the fundamental principles remain unchanged.

TRAVELING LIBRARY STATISTICS

The chief lack of uniformity is now apparently due to a difference in *application* of these principles and a difference of terminology. Such questions as the following arise: Does a letter from a school superintendent, asking for material on seventeen different orations, constitute *one* request or seventeen requests? Does the sending of ten books of art from the general loan collection, in addition to a miscellaneous fixed group, constitute the filling of one request or of two requests? Should renewals be included in the total number of books loaned? When is a pamphlet a pamphlet and when is it a book?

When is a periodical a periodical, a pamphlet or a book? How classify clippings? How classify study club outlines? How best show in statistics, the co-operation with county and township systems? Shall we keep a record of reference questions answered, and is a request a request when answered by letter only, rather than by sending a book? These and many other questions occur to one in looking over various reports.

In order that the benefits of the work done by that committee of several years ago be not lost, I am suggesting that it might be well if a committee was appointed to take up the problem where it was left and, working on the principles outlined at that time, revise the system of recording traveling library statistics to meet present needs. That the committee anticipated the need of revision is seen by the following statement quoted from its final report: "The committee recommends that these blanks be used by all traveling library systems, while realizing that there will doubtless be developments and new needs that will call for adjustment in the future." The League membership is greater now and a larger number of traveling library systems, covering more sections of the country, could be called upon to co-operate in the revision. It would seem advisable, also, that some provision be made whereby these blanks, when revised, be supplied regularly to the travel-

ing libraries using them and that they be called to the attention of all new traveling library systems. At present there is a possibility that, due to change in personnel, the matter will be overlooked.

The importance of a recognized basis for statistics is evidenced by the fact that the Council of the A. L. A. adopted a few years ago a uniform statistical blank for public libraries. Would not a uniform basis for traveling library statistics be equally advantageous in the Commission field?

At the close of Miss Davis' paper a motion was presented and carried that the chair appoint a committee to outline a uniform traveling record blank and report at the mid-winter meeting.

The subject of making a compilation of all library laws of the different states was presented by the president. It was decided, on motion, that it be left in the hands of the executive committee, with power to act.

A. L. A. ENLARGED PROGRAM ENDORSED

Mrs. Earl presented the following resolution, which was adopted by the League:

RESOLVED, that the League of Library Commissions endorses the A. L. A. Enlarged Program and the appeal for funds as worthy of the support of all library commissions and state library extension departments.

The meeting adjourned.

ANNA MAY PRICE,
Secretary, League of Library Commissions.